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Friday FACTS

16 April 2004

"Leadership, Partnership, and Championship"

Catastrophic Failures of Public Health to Effectively Address Overweight and Obesity

In the March 6, 2004 issue of *The Lancet* there's an interesting editorial titled "The catastrophic failures of public health". The writer suggests that public health leaders need to "replace prevarication with imagination" in addressing the issues of Americans being overweight and (in some cases) obese. The Lancet editor refers back to the pioneer British epidemiologist John Snow (<http://www.ph.ucla.edu/epi/snow.html>) in his actions which resulted in principles still applied today. The Lancet editor goes on to say that we are "...at the dawn of an exploding new threat to population health, which will reverse many gains made by improved diagnosis and treatment." He is referring to the fact that "people are getting fatter and less physically active, and are therefore much more prone to killer chronic illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes."



For those interested in the issue of overweight and obesity in the US population, a good place to begin your search is at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/index.htm>. At this site, you will find information drawn from CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (1991-2001), the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES 1999-2000), and other surveillance programs.

Institute of Medicine releases water and electrolyte DRI report

The Institute of Medicine's Food and Nutrition Board held a press conference Wednesday to release their latest Daily Recommended Intake (DRI) report. This report on fluid and electrolytes was intended to give healthy guidelines for sodium, potassium, chloride, water, and sulfate consumption. The bottom line?

- * Recommends a goal of 1.5g of sodium per day.
- * Recommends a goal of 2.3g of chloride per day.
- * Recommends a minimum of 4.7g of potassium from natural food sources such as fruits, vegetables, and juices and sets no upper limit from food sources.
- * Recommends 2.7 liters of water from food and beverage sources for women.
- * Recommends 3.7 liters of water for men.
- * The committee refrained from making any recommendation on sulfate intake.
- * Recommendations for children were also determined and vary by age according to average caloric intake.

The committee emphasized that the recommendations for nutrients are based on total diet intake. For instance, most people get approximately 80 percent of their water from fluid and 20 percent from food. Thus, the water recommendation does not translate to a fluid recommendation but rather an average woman would need to consume approximately two liters of fluid per day to meet her total 2.7 L/day goal of water. It is noteworthy that meeting the dietary potassium goal will require approximately ten servings per day of fruits and vegetables. In addition, the 1.5g sodium goal would be met in as little as $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp of salt per day. Thus, meeting these new DRIs, like so many other nutrition goals, will require significant dietary changes among typical Americans. The full report can be viewed on the Institute of Medicine Website at <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news/nsf/isbn/0309091705?OpenDocument>



*"Learn from
yesterday, live
for today,
hope for
tomorrow."*

-Anon.